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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001548

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KTIP](#) [KWMN](#) [KCRM](#) [HSTC](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: POST'S ANTI-TIP FULL-COURT PRESS

REF: YEREVAN 1524

Classified By: CDA A. F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) Post delivered a major push on trafficking in persons this week, meeting a number of senior government officials to discuss the GOAM's anti-trafficking efforts. In each meeting, we delivered a strong message: Armenia risks another year on the Tier 2 Watch List, or worse, if the GOAM doesn't address our concerns about investigatorial misconduct, the unfunded and behind-schedule draft National Action Plan, and the low working level of the interagency Anti-Trafficking Commission. END SUMMARY.

CDA PUSHES DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER HARD ON TIP

2. (C) During a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian October 30, Charge D'Affaires (CDA) presented our concerns about the Prosecutor General's (PG) latest cursory investigation into charges of misconduct by two of his anti-trafficking investigators (reftel). He also pushed Kirakossian and MFA International Organizations Department Head Valery Mkrtumian, who also leads the GOAM's interagency Anti-TIP Commission, on the fact that Armenia only recently had begun to draft a new National Action Plan for which no funds had been earmarked in Armenia's 2007 budget. CDA said we were concerned about the effect of these issues on Armenia's TIP ranking, but that he felt the GOAM could prevent an unfavorable ranking in 2007. Specifically, he suggested conducting a more serious internal investigation at the PG's Office and allocating funds for the National Action Plan. Both the deputy foreign minister and Mkrtumian were noticeably distressed at the idea that Armenia would remain on the Tier 2 Watch List, or worse. Mkrtumian, who is very invested in Armenia's anti-trafficking fight, but unfortunately is not senior enough to have meaningful influence within the government, pleaded with the CDA several times during the meeting that downgrading Armenia to Tier 3 would be "a very bad signal," given Armenia's progress in regional anti-TIP cooperation, particularly with Turkey.

3. (C) Mkrtumian told us the government could not set aside money for the National Action Plan before the plan were approved. He said the Anti-TIP Commission might request funds for it in 2007, but admitted that would leave the plan without government funding for a year. He said the National Action Plan would be dependent on external funding from international organizations, and mentioned a UNDP program in particular. CDA countered that the GOAM must put its money where its mouth is in order to demonstrate

true commitment to the fight against human trafficking.
(NOTE: During a November 2 meeting with Poloff, UNDP staff said they had made no commitment to fund the National Action Plan. END NOTE.)

POST SENDS MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT

14. (C) CDA and Pol/Econ chief also raised TIP at a private lunch October 30 with presidential staff adviser Vigen Sargsian, making the same points as with Kirakossian. Sargsian appreciated the heads-up about Armenia's precarious position, and promised to relay the message to the president. He suggested that, despite having missed the government's budget request to parliament, it may not be too late to get 2007 funding appropriated for the action plan. He said that it would require getting in touch with parliamentarians who could add the appropriation to the budget -- which we did (see para 6). Sargsian also asked about who had been responsible for developing the National Action Plan and requesting funding.

15. (C) Pol/Econ chief had lunch with presidential national security adviser Garnik Isaghulian October 31, primarily to highlight our TIP concerns. Isaghulian also promised to see that President Kocharian got the message. Isaghulian especially took our point that the interagency Anti-TIP Commission chaired by MFA department head Mkrtumian and attended by mid-level civil servants lacked the political heft to drive GOAM policy changes. Commission members lack the authority even to commit their own agencies to take concrete action.

YEREVAN 00001548 002 OF 002

CDA PUSHES MP TO FIND MONEY FOR ANTI-TIP EFFORTS

16. (C) CDA met November 1 with MP Hranush Hakobian, a member of the ruling Republican Party's caucus, to ask that she propose funding for the National Action Plan that would be contingent upon the government's approval of the plan. Hakobian agreed to discuss the issue with Prime Minister Markarian, and recounted her success in previous years in inserting funding for gender-equality issues into the budget. She suggested she might be able to convince the PM to find 10 million AMD (about 26,000 USD) for the National Action Plan, but would have to find the equivalent amount from another budget line item.

COMMENT

17. (C) As we told our interlocutors, Armenia has made some tangible and encouraging progress on human trafficking, including the training of prosecutors and judges, and the development of procedures for victim identification. We pushed hard on the areas in which there has been insufficient progress, using the TIP Tier rankings as both carrot and stick, in hopes of spurring the GOAM to action. We are optimistic that MP Hakobian will find funding for the National Action Plan, and have had strong signals that the GOAM plans to elevate its anti-TIP interagency commission to a more senior level. We are less certain that the PG's Office will conduct a real probe into the allegations of misconduct by its investigators. We believe that the powerful PG would be swayed only by a direct order from President Kocharian, which, while not at all guaranteed, is not completely out of the realm of possibility.
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